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## Relearning from interviews

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Dialogic projects as architectural theory

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### Synopsis

This extended abstract has the objective to explore the role of the journalist architect who talks with other architects to produce interviews as autonomous projects of architectural theory. In this case it will be tried to justify the pertinence of including this dialogic project as a genre of architectural thought production from the journalistic methodology focused on Relearning from Las Vegas, revising the work written by the architects from their answers and from the approach of the architect who asks as a new confronted account for the critique of architecture. Interviews between architects is a clear example of how the way in which theory is produced incorporating a new model of «project interviewing». This means building another type of knowledge while talking and Koolhaas transfers it to his professional activity in this interview as an illustrative example of the subject matter is intended to point out.

**Key words:** Interview, project, journalism, Koolhaas, dialogic.

*Relearning from Las Vegas* (2000) is an interview of Hans Ulrich Obrist and Rem Koolhaas, author of *Delirious New York* (1978), to Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, authors of *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972). The framework is the coincidence of being a contemporary document of journalistic genre developed among architects who are also authors of manifestos referents in anthologies of History of Theory of Architecture. This allows the objective to be explored the role of the journalist architect who talks to other architects to produce interviews as autonomous projects of architectural theory. In this case, it will be tried to justify the pertinence of including this dialogic project as a genre of architectural thought production from the journalistic methodology focused on the content published in *Project on the City II: The Harvard Guide to Shopping*.

Before becoming an architect, Remment Lucas Koolhaas worked in the 1960s at the Dutch newspaper *Haagse Post* as a journalist for a variety of interviews, including those about architecture to Le Corbusier, Wijdeveld and Constant. A background that he later transferred as an architect to his meetings with other architects such as Ungers, Philip Johnson, the Japanese metabolists,..., and as will be seen, Venturi and Scott Brown. These are not chosen by chance but are part of a strategy of reinterpretation where the interviewees that are chosen situate past issues in the present.

With this contextual basis and considering interview models as techniques to approach the way in which is to be conducted, the technique used is question-answer. Unlike other initial interviews by Koolhaas with a greater literary load, this format of questions acquires another consideration because each part is not preceded by a title as a slogan that conceptualizes the content, but rather the division is made by numbering what could be thematic blocks. So if a summary titling exercise not done is made in the interview, it could be the index of a publication but, is it the spontaneity of a conversation that makes it less taken seriously as a project of architectural theory? The naturalness of this genre is what makes it possible to discover unknown information while generating theoretical content for architecture, revising and completing in this case the work written by the architects from their answers and from the approach of the architect who asks.

At first the lead is used to link interviewer and interviewees manifestos introducing the previous hypothesis of the non-existence of manifestos on architecture but books of cities that suppose manifestos. Three strategies are identified: assume an assumption, formulate a suspicion and question by acknowledging the respondent. These are intentionally charged interrogations where the sender takes a position and hints at the answer. These interrogations have a double objective: confirmatory, seeking the agreement of the interviewees to validate their theories if they do not obtain objections and, as is also the case on this occasion, interpretative, with Venturi's position on their rejection of abstract form and the value of electronic iconography today. This answer complete the following question, also addressed but of the opposite type, that is to say, seeking the possible disagreement of the interviewees with a headline: "they proclaim the death of architecture". A provocative method that leads to the interviewee clarifies that what they proclaim is "the death of sculpture as architecture", thanks to the capacity for successive correction that a dialogue offers. It is shown how this format exercised between architects makes it possible to formulate contrasted theory

simultaneously whose conclusions have the credit of the thought contributed by both sides; what is colloquially a «two-for-one» included in the text, which constitutes a new confronted account for the critique of architecture.

Another important figure who characterizes Koolhaas' professional activity also as a journalist is the collaborator. In this case and in a large part of his interviews as an architect he does is Obrist, who has experience interviewing artists and provides the ability to diversify the conversation into other disciplines but also to act as interviewer for the interviewer as well as for the interviewees. Are not used hinge-questions as a transition between the identified themes but is preferred to use with a propositive rather than a compositional function in the journalistic structure. These are statements that add information and generate comments from the interviewee rather than questions from which answers are obtained, but which do give the interviewer the opportunity to set a content on which the interview can then take a free form with shorter hypothetical questions that involve perceptions and reveal facts that the interviewees are reluctant to acknowledge.

Some examples already cited, the particularity of this interview is that the object, which is the information requested, comes from both subjects, which are the emitters, interviewers and interviewees, and the receiver is the architect or non architect reader who consumes the format as a genre. The interest of its question-answer structure is the ability to exchange opinions derived from the verbal act of speech as a code in the form of questions or findings, and not as part of an account. In this case, Koolhaas transfers it as a project to his professional activity with mechanisms derived from the practice of asking a person and thinking at the same time: information gathering, conceptualization, reinterpretation, architectural criticism,... This allows to explore possible ways of practicing architecture far removed from the traditional model that considers the architectural project as a matter of design alone. The intuition to be verified is that this journalistic genre is a clear example of how the way in which theory is produced and is applied to architecture as a significant project from which to exercise the profession, understanding project as the result of the production of architectural thought as a result of dialogic interaction.

Consideration is given to, on the one hand, the character that has been attributed to this journalistic genre practiced among architects for having had a merely instrumental function in producing other texts and, on the other hand, their treatment as independent projects to construct Theory of the History of Architecture in a hypothetical contemporary anthology that incorporates a new model of «project interviewing». This means building another type of knowledge while talking and Koolhaas transfers it to his professional activity in this interview as an illustrative example of the subject matter is intended to point out. A scenario in which the conversations between interlocutors -as Professor Leonor Arfuch points out- which do not seek to reduce complexity but perhaps to delve deeper into it, do not constitute a minor genre in relation to the essay, the treatise or the thesis, but rather a different way of sustaining the word.



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## Biography

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